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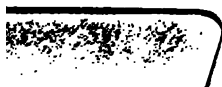
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ENGLISH ALICE.

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ENGLISH ALICE,

A POEM IN FIVE CANTOS,

BY

ALEXANDER JOHN EVELYN, ESQ.



LONDON:
WILLIAM PICKERING.

1852.

280. N. 218.



ENGLISH ALICE.

CANTO I.

HOW sweet the hour, how fragrant, and
how still,
When morning rises over gay Seville!
How rich the perfume from the
orange-bower!

Soft lie the tears of night upon each flower!
Soon will those tears upon the rose be dry,
For swiftly mounts the sun the eastern sky;
Soon will the tender influence of morn
Succumb beneath his angry glance of scorn.
Lo! at yon casement, open to the ground,
That woos the fresh air, and the silvery sound
Of water that, in column'd gush upthrown,
Returns in spray, and tinkles on the stone,
A maiden stands, and drinks in all the scene—
The murm'ring fount, the flowers, each arbour
green—

To seize the freshness of the early day,

Ere wither'd yet by noontide's scorching ray.
A flower, not born beneath the sultry sky
That o'er Iberia spreads its azure dye,
She seems; but, in her fresh and blooming prime,
Transplanted from a mild and temperate clime.
No large black eyes with languid fierceness shine,
And show a soul more sensual than divine;
No raven tresses, deck'd with careless taste,
Prolong their graceful sweep below the waist;
No olive hues, imprest upon the cheek,
The burning pencil of a hot sun speak.
Fair is the maiden's cheek, where gently glows
The soften'd colour of the blushing rose;
In clust'ring curls her radiant ringlets spread,
And throw a golden glory round her head;
While from her eyes, so softly, deeply blue,
Beams forth a spirit loving, tender, true—
Pure as a holy angel's pitying prayer
For a lost sinner in his dark despair.
But not the charm of loveliness alone,
Bright though it be, is round the maiden thrown:
In the clear lineaments of that fair face
No timid mind, no feeble will we trace;
No girlish fears, no pretty nervousness
Their boldly chisell'd characters express.
Upon that ample forehead's white expanse
Sits a high dignity enthroned; the glance
Of that blue eye, not always mildly bright,
Kindles at times, and flashes with strange light,
As though the great thought of some high emprise,

Of courage true, of selfless sacrifice,
Had stirr'd the calm depths of the maiden's soul,
And made their gentle waves tumultuously roll.
Doth that small mouth, though lovely, but suggest
The contact of lip amorously prest
To lip of lover? doth it not too tell
Of purpose bold, of will invincible,
Of mind to plan, of daring to perform,
Of fearless firmness 'mid the surging storm?
Such Alice was,—in every motion grace,
Mind, beauty-set, all lustrous in her face.—
Now to the dewy garden she descends,
And up the gravel'd pathway slowly wends;
Admires a tree, stoops to a fragrant flower,
And twines the drooping woodbine round its bower.
Why starts she as the path abruptly wheels?
What form is that its sudden turn reveals?
On her soft cheek the rosy colour burns,
Dyes her white neck, and comes and goes by turns—
So have I seen the high-piled mountain snow
At early morn in the red sun-beams glow;
So have I seen that snow, when morning's brightness
Was clouded fitfully, resume its pallid whiteness.
“ Alice, my love!—sweet Alice!” thus he cried,
And, quickly bounding, panted at her side;
Round her slight form his arm is fondly thrown,—
Her fluttering heart is throbbing 'gainst his own.
She draws her gently from that pure embrace,
And looks with anxious fondness in his face.
“ How pale thou art, Alphonse! how wan and worn!

Still dost thou keep thy vigils till the morn !
Still art thou deaf to Alice' earnest prayer,
Still dost thou mock her tenderness and care !
Thou knowest I prize knowledge, and am proud
That thou that subtle spirit so hast bow'd
To thy strong yoke, that all the golden keys,
That open Nature's hidden mysteries,
It hath to thee in forced submission given,
And shown thee all the wonders of the heaven.
But all the lore that sages ever taught
Too dearly at the price of life is bought."
"Nay, Alice dear—in sooth, thy fears are vain ;
I do not wrongfully o'ertask my brain.
But with what passion, from my dawning youth,
I've loved, and worshipp'd at the shrine of Truth—
How I have toil'd, the impenetrable cloud,
That wraps her features from the vulgar crowd
In awful majesty, backwards to roll,
And see unveil'd this goddess of my soul—
Feeble are words to tell ! Oh, I had thought—
Ere, Alice, thou hadst other feelings brought—
That woman in my love should ne'er have part,
But Truth alone reign mistress of my heart !
But as small drops innumerable make,
When fused and harmonized, the mighty lake
We call the ocean, so is Truth abstract
Of countless self-like minor truths compact,
Which—all unlike the globules of the sea—
Are fixed for ever in their place, are free
From ebb and flow, and fickleness of tide,

Nor suffer increase, and decay deride.
 The All-seeing One alone at will can lance
 His concentrated, yet expansive, glance
 Through the infinite whole ; laboriously to scan
 Part after part—this is the task of man.
 About Religion what might be the true—
 Ere thee, my sweetest Alice, yet I knew—
 I doubted not,—one fitting doubt were sin—
 So was I taught,—and heeded not the din
 Of Reason clashing in my mind with Faith.
 Oh ! the wretch, hunted on the sea by Death,
 Roaring behind and foaming on his track,
 Grasps not some spray-drench'd rock's rough rug-
 ged back

With more convulsive clutch, than what did twine
 Me to communion with this creed of mine !
 Herein force-satisfied, I next began
 Nature's vast book with eager eye to scan ;
 Striving to trace effects up to their cause,
 And to investigate the general laws
 That sway material things—which laws may be }
 Subject, like these, to mutability, }
 If so, not real truths, that never flee—
 And then of this dark hieroglyphic scroll
 To seize the abstruse meaning,—to control
 Each type's deep symbol-teaching, till I saw
 A truth itself stand forth, whole, without flaw.
 If with such zeal unflagging I pursued
 These lesser truths, in what energetic mood
 Should I—since thou hast shaken all I felt

On things divine, o'er the altar where I knelt
Flinging of scepticism the shadow drear,
Shelter'd 'neath which each ghastly-visaged fear,
That cower'd before, dark-shrinking from the light,
Prowls through my heart, like beast that loves the
night—

Labour to shatter this oppressive doubt,
And from its crumbled ruins to draw out,
To see, to feel, to hold that truth so blest,
The mighty centre-piece of all the rest ? ”
“ Now, Heaven forbid that I should clog thy way
To the bright sun-light of the dawning day,
I who first gave the impulse ! which *will* yet
Rise gladly in thy soul, no more to set,
If God be true, who promises to guide
The earnest seeker, on his aid relied.
'Tis hard, I know, the steadying anchor riven,
Forth from the sheltering harbour to be driven
To the vast deep, 'mid shifting winds and waves,
Where the vexed soul with painful longing craves
Deliverance from death, from tumult rest,
And doubt and fear sit heavy on the breast.
But if yon haven-land, that smiled so fair,
Had foul infection in its tainted air ?
If its bright sky was one sepulchral dome
Where noisome Pestilence had fix'd her home ?
If those who tarried, raptured by its charms,
Corrupted died in the unclean monster's arms ?
And if the bark—albeit with shatter'd mast,
With sails all rent, and ruin'd hull—at last



Wins a bright shore, far lovelier in form
Than what 'twas torn from by a Heaven-sent storm ;
Where breakers never roar, nor tempests rave,
Nor rocks crouch ambush'd 'neath th' insidious wave ;
Where the clear atmosphere, with pureness rife,
In beauty masks not foulness, death in life ;
But every breeze wafts healing on its wings,
And from its swaying censers sweetest odours wings ?”
“ Oh, for that Eden-country how I crave !
Soon may its watch-towers beacon o'er the wave !
Oh, I would greet them, shining on the night
That shrouds my soul, with more entranced delight
Than eastern Magi hail'd the mystic star
That to the cradled Saviour from afar
Pointed its gleaming fingers ! Ah !—But stay,—
Who is that yonder slowly comes this way ?”
“ Oh, 'tis a man that wounds my very sight !
Thy father confessor—wrapt in the night
Of his dark thoughts—Oh ! Alphonse, mark him
well—

His stealthy cat-like tread,—his eyes to hell
Downcast, not raised to yonder glorious heaven ;
And if, at times, with pain they're upwards driven,
With filmy gaze they look at you askance,
But never enterprise one fair straight glance.
He's read, perchance, the eyes betray the heart,
And fears to have his traitors—for my part,
I'm glad it's so—'tis not for maiden's eye
In the obscure depths of such a mind to pry.
Oh, say, Alphonse, can yonder man speak true ?

Should'st thou not say—if only thou would'st view
Him as another—Falsehood there had found
A fitting home? His every look, the sound
Of his sleek voice, his subtle gestures, gait—
Do they not weary with their ceaseless prate
Of Falsehood? Not more clearly doth the plan
Of the form—the face, hands, arms—proclaim a man
Than those a liar: if, in frolic, Truth
E'er dons a mask, it is not such, in sooth.”
“Indeed, the father is o'ermuch reserved;
Yet thou may'st wrong him; he may not have swerved
From the straight path—at least, not wittingly—
But hush,—he's here.” “Fair greeting, son, to thee,
And to thee, lady—daughter I would joy
To greet thee, but with heretic alloy,
Alas, thou'rt deeply tainted, and the name
True votaries of the Church alone may claim,
I am not free to give thee—” “Nor, please God,
Shall ever have that freedom!” “I did bode
Some such reply—How strange that one so fair,
So beautiful that you might almost swear
That God had form'd her for his own delight,
And joy'd to concentrate his infinite sight
Upon her, yet should seem the destined prey,
The allotted spoil of Satan! And so gay
In her young life she is! the horrid Doom,
That flaps its sable pinions o'er her bloom,
Eager to stoop upon its victim, flings
No single shade of gloom from off its wings
Athwart her radiant brow! The forest-bird

The vicinage of the snake, unseen, unheard,
Led by keen instinct, it is said, infers ;
'Neath a bright sky, ere yet the tempest stirs,
A fine presage is slid into its breast,
And warns it homewards to the shelt'ring nest :
But reasoning man secure himself doth think
With ruin imminent, and on the brink
Of the abyss respire untroubled breath,—
The dread abyss of everlasting death.—
And, lady, yet I nursed a feeble hope
That Heaven might grant thee grace and strength
to cope
With the dark might of Satan—that the pleas
I urged in truth's behalf, by slow degrees
Might win their way unto thy darken'd mind,
Parting the vaporous clouds that choke and blind
Thine inward sight, till in upon thy soul
God's light in mighty flood should unobstructed
roll !”

“ Sir, in good sooth, upon my listless ear
Thy vain words fell unheeded—such light gear
On my fix'd mind no more impression makes
Than on some sturdy rock the snow's soft flakes.
Whoso by calm and patient search hath found
What he believes the truth, plants on sure ground
A footstep firm, and needeth not to stray
O'er the mark'd bounds of his determined way
To prove each bog and fen around that spreads,—
Enough for him to feel *he* firmly treads.
But satisfy him by a cogent proof


The path he walks on forms the crumbling roof
Of a deep hollow cavern, or doth pass
Into the treacherous ooze of a morass—
His labours past are all unravell'd then,
And he begins his toilsome task again.
Then tell him that what seem'd a marsh, is sound,
And dry, and firm, and foot-sustaining ground,
And he will list the reasons which you urge.
So, prove thou I am on the perilous verge
Of ruin (which thou hast not even tried),
And then that thou walk'st safely and in pride.
'Tis vain, though—even should'st thou prove me
wrong,

A heavenly angel's sweet persuasive tongue
Should ne'er seduce me, in my sorest need,
To clasp the monstrous horror of thy creed!"
"Lady, beware!—there's danger in thy words—
I tell thee, here they are so many swords
That 'gainst the daring speaker turn their keen
And deadly points! Lady, I do not mean
Harshly to menace; but reflect, I pray—
Thy foot no longer treads on English clay
Where hell-begotten heresy maintains
Her usurp'd sway, and gives the flowing reins
Of license to each vain and babbling tongue
To speak at random, and to spread among
The uninfected the foul leprosy
That kills the tainted soul. Here none is free—
Here in this favour'd land where reigns supreme
The Holy Apostolic Church—to deem

Himself a judge in matters that pertain
To Christian rite or doctrine. If in Spain
We suffer any heretic to live,
It is a gracious tolerance ; and we give
This boon alone to those who do not speak
Against our Holy Faith—As for the weak,
And frail, and sinful souls of our own flock—
Those dark apostates who profanely mock
The truth that nursed them—their pestiferous
 breath
Must not taint others,—their just doom is death.
Hear'st thou, my son ? ” “ Father, I hear.” “ 'Tis
 well.—

Lady, how comes it thou art forced to dwell
Far from thy home beneath an alien sky ?
Why closed thy sire an exile's aching eye
In a strange land ? Ah, would'st thou but compare
The untroubled quiet here, the turbulence there,—
The peace that seems enamour'd of this land,
The war that dyes with blood thy native strand”—
“ Oh, better far the tumult and the strife,
The battling energies of vivid life,
Than the dread torpor of that silent cave
Where nought is active but decay—the grave !
Oh, happier far to fall upon the plain,
In Freedom's cause, 'mid heaps of mangled slain,
And, while the air with sounds of war is riven,
To breathe the enfranchised spirit into Heaven,
Than live a wretched and degraded thing,
A crouching craven slave—afraid to fling

One bold regard into the despot's face,
And proudly vindicate his manhood's place—
Nor know the godlike frenzy that inspires
The man whom, fighting, love of Freedom fires ! ”
“ Ah, lady, dost thou praise the deeds of those
Who forced thy sire to seek a sad repose
In banishment? Loyal, he did not yield
Till hope was strangled on that fatal field ”—
“ My father *was* a gallant cavalier,
And dear—how justly to his daughter dear !
No despot he—oh, never beat a heart
More kind and tender—and the despot's part
If he espoused, it was that he believed
No act of kingly tyranny reprieved
The subject from his fealty—he fought,
Blaming the deeds of those with whom he wrought.
Oh, when I saw him to the battle ride,
Distraction's billows beat in double tide
'Gainst my vexed heart—the triumph of his cause
Would quell our freedom, trample on our laws ;
And that, erect, they held their ancient seat,
Implied my sire's disaster and defeat.”
“ The end of all—he lies in a strange land,—
No priest in blessing raised his hallowing hand ;
No organ murmur'd, and no belfry toll'd—
Thy father's is unconsecrated mould.”
“ Oh, Sir, believe me, not the blended swell
Of choir and organ, not the muffled bell,
Nor mumbled jargon of a stammering clerk,
Can speed the sin-soil'd spirit through the dark



Death-valley,—while the soul, whose robes are
white,
At once on angels' wings soars up to Heaven's
light!

Full peacefully my father's dust will rest
In his low foreign grave, till rise the blest—
Yet not all foreign,—from our own green bowers
I'd brought some seeds of simple English flowers,
Which I have planted at his grassy tomb;
And now around its humble precincts bloom
His native violets, and on the air
The English rose sighs forth its incensed prayer.
They will not droop in time of drought—my tears,
Whose welling source lies hid in bygone years,
Water them daily, when I come to pray
And meditate beside my father's clay.”
“Now, lady, that I say farewell is meet—
I do not argue with thee more,—thy feet
Are set, I fear, too firmly in the path
That downwards leads to everlasting wrath.
Yet, in all kindness, I would say, take care
Thou heed'st the warning which I gave—beware
How thou speak'st lightly of our Holy Faith,
Even in thy chamber, and with bated breath.
I tell thee, the Inquisition's wakeful ear
Is sensitive to such whispers—it can hear
Tho' walls of stone lift their huge bulk between—
And powerless I would be to intervene,
Even though relentless duty did not stand
Waving me back with stern and menacing hand.

My son, at eve, when yon bright orb grows pale,
I look to see thee—" Father, I'll not fail.—
Oh, Alice, to that warning give due weight—
Sudden and irresistible, like fate,
The Holy Office strikes,—its awful arm
Is everywhere. Thou knowest that from harm
To shield thee I would joy to give my life—
Still thou would'st perish,—in the unequal strife
Both would be crush'd—" "Alphonse, fear not
for me—

But ask thyself, of such dark agency
Hath true Religion need? Say, doth she make
Of racks and cords, of gibbets and the stake,
Chosen evangel instruments, and bind,
By such coarse physical means, the struggling mind?
Oh, Truth, of its own innate force, like light,
Spreads, and itself compels the mental sight
To recognise it!—He, the mild, the meek,
Who ever raised, not crush'd, the fall'n and weak,—
Whose tears responsive flow'd to human grief,—
Who ne'er withheld sweet comfort and relief
From suffering mortal,—whose faint parting breath
Exhaled in prayer for those who wrought his
death—

Oh! say, doth He, the all-loving One, preside
Pleased o'er the pangs of those for whom He died?
Fair to His eye do mangled limbs appear?
Are shrieks of anguish music in His ear?
Does the black smoke of human pyres arise
In grateful incense to Him in the skies?—

Oh, blasphemous imagining, avaunt ! ”
Shudd’ring, she cried—Such fearful thought could
daunt

Nerves which at threat of torture would not quail,
Nor in the martyr’s fiery trial fail.

“ Sweet Alice ! I will ponder on thy speech—
Perchance it is thy destiny to teach
Me how to win immortal happiness,
And not alone my earthly lot to bless.”


“ Now, grant it, Heav’n ! So truly art thou dear
To this poor heart, I would relinquish here
Each smiling hope that paints our wedded bliss,
Each dear delight, each fond caress and kiss—
Like that which now thy circling arm doth seek,
Like that which now thou print’st upon my cheek—
To be assured thy cherish’d name was traced
In gleaming letters, ne’er to be effaced,
In the Redeemer’s registering scroll !
For oh, believe it !—howsoe’er thy soul
Recoils from horrors it must needs detest,
And shudders from them back into thy breast—
The silent sanction which thou lend’st each deed
By not abjuring the accursed creed
From which it flows, as rivers from their source,
Will fetter thee with adamantine force
To the whole system, whose dread guilty weight
Will drag thee with it to its own just fate.
And now farewell—in Heaven the sun mounts
high,

Short’ning our shadows, and I long to fly

To my own chamber, and, low kneeling there,
To wrestle for thee with my God in prayer.”
Her graceful form he follows with his eyes,
As lightly o’er the garden sward it flies ;
More distant now, and fitfully half seen
In glimpses caught the orange-trees between,
With glance more ardent, and afraid to lose
One single gleam of beauty, he pursues
The loveliness receding—as the ear
With more intensity is strain’d to hear,
When some sweet voice pours its soft notes along,
The last faint murmur of the expiring song.
Slowly he turns, and pondering moves away,
Till into some such words his musings stray—
“ Alice ! how pure, how holy, how divine
Must thy religion be, how devilish mine,
If thou of thine as fitting type art lent
To earth, while torturing demons represent
The other !—Where Falsehood is a harbour’d guest,
Though in Truth’s guise it stole into the breast,
It aye exerts an influence unkind,
And noiselessly corrodes the unconscious mind.
A subtle poison through the spirit steals,
Disorganized by which, it sees and feels
By rules awry, and oft becomes a stream
Where objects mirror’d all inverted seem.
Thus things are changed into their opposite,
And hellish wrong embraced for heavenly right ;
Murder is deem’d a duty, and to yield
To mercy’s gentle voice a crime is seal’d.

That I am thus distemper'd, and believe
The false to be the true, I can conceive ;
Perchance the venom shows itself herein—
That deeds, which Nature cries aloud are sin,
I give a shudd'ring sanction to, and quell
By force the feelings that will still rebel.
But Alice—where's the fatal spot in her
Betrays the taint of Falsehood? what one blur,
What sully'ing speck upon her stainless soul
Deforms the splendid brightness of the whole?
Oh, in each principle, each settled thought,
By calm reflection in her being wrought,—
In each quick impulse, each instinctive play
Of mind, that Nature's moment-promptings sway,—
So true she seems, it is in doubt with me
If Truth itself can truer be than she !
In her sweet converse, buoyant I inspire
Freedom's pure breath,—at every word of fire
She speaks, I startle at the clashing sound
Of a fresh mind-chain rattling to the ground!"—
And now he stands before his lonely room—
He enters, and a sudden curtaining gloom
Drops o'er his heart,—a vague and dreary sense
Of chill discomfort, loneliness intense—
The sinking of the spirit that arose
To rapture, when no more the rapture glows ;
The pang of vacancy, that doth suggest
The recent fulness of the o'erflowing breast.
" Oh, Alice, it is only absence shows
The dearness of thy presence ! my heart knows

It's blest with thee, but takes it as of course,
And fails to trace the rapture to its source—
Reckless, I quaff a deep delicious draught,
Nor estimate its sweetness till it's quaff'd.
Not so in future—when I'm blest with thee,
I'll hug the fleeting blessing ere it flee;
Sad memory sha'n't reproach, when past the kiss,
The dull appreciation of the bliss;
No precious moment will I leave untold,
But count them as a miser counts his gold;
The living pleasure with the ghost of past
Delight, the first to heighten, I'll contrast—
I'll think each minute,—‘ My beloved is here—
’Tis her soft voice falls melting on my ear;
’Tis her sweet eyes that look into my soul;
’Tis her caresses soothe me and console.’
I'll think each minute,—‘ She will soon have fled,
And nought remain but wither'd leaves of dead
Endearment—while the roses freshly bloom,
Oh, seize the beauty, drink the rich perfume!’”



CANTO II.

THE day is sinking—in the level west
 The broad red sun displays his crimson crest,
 Far-floating upon clouds that seem to pillow,
 But change and heave as restless as the billow.
 Through the tall pillars of a convent-pile
 The yellow beams roll inwards, and beguile
 The cloister'd gloom that dwells within the place,
 Wrapping each column in a half-embrace,
 For shadow intervening, black as night,
 Forbids their golden claspings to unite.—
 A cowl'd monk along the stone-paved floor
 Is slowly pacing in those cloisters hoar.
 At the first glance, you'd say he closely scann'd
 A sombre-looking volume in his hand;
 His eyes are fix'd upon the letter'd page,
 Which seems his whole wrapt spirit to engage.
 Perchance, he looks into those glories past
 That from the abyss do strongly upwards cast,
 Through the dark vista of degraded years,
 A flood of light that, rainbow'd now by tears,
 Round the shrunk frames of Rome and Athens
 throws
 A bright sad halo, glimmering o'er their woes?

Or doth he con the poet's classic rhyme,
And, soaring, wing with him his flight sublime?
Ah, no—the cradles both of Rome and Greece
Were rock'd by fable, and the poet's piece
Is fashion'd wholly out of the ideal—
A holy monk must have the true, the real.
One single thread of fiction in the woof,
One single link lost from the chain of proof,—
The web was woven not for him, the chain
He spurns as worthless with a deep disdain.
Wilt know the truthful study of the friar?
The book where not one sentence is a liar?
It is a Chronicle of Popish Saints,
And with a lively faithful pencil paints
Their lives, their deaths, their virtues—not their
vices,

For they had none—their miracles, devices
Inspired by Heaven in their sorest need—
For genuine miracles, it is agreed,
As doing violence to Nature's laws,
Are never wrought without a worthy cause.
One Saint, it tells, to cross the sea did crave,
But had no ship to waft him o'er the wave;
So, Saints and Angels he did all invoke,
Then threw upon the heaving tide his cloak
(A boat-cloak probably), which safely bore
Its sacred burthen to the distant shore.
Another holy Saint, whom wicked men
Slew and beheaded, was restored again
To life; but thinking that upon his shoulder

His head had been ill-placed, and that to solder
It on once more would hardly be worth while,
Beneath his arm he tuck'd it with a smile.
Another Saint shone brightly in the night—
Though not renown'd for brilliance in the light.
St. Januarius cruel decollation
Suffer'd, and still the lazzaroni-nation
Preserves a bottle of his blood congeal'd,
And his head ; wouldst thou have the frost unseal'd
That binds the blood ? Apply it to the fire—
Not so,—the head of the departed friar
Approximate until it touch the phial—
It liquifies at once, beyond denial.
How hot-headed soe'er he may have been,
His cranium had had time to cool, I ween.—
The marvels all 'twere tedious to detail,—
But not less true than these was every tale.—
The cowl'd monk along the stone-paved floor
Still slowly paces in those cloisters hoar.
Still on the same part of the page unturn'd
His downcast eyes are fix'd, and we have learn'd
He doth not read, but muses.—O'er his face
There flits, and vanishes, a strange grimace,
Of meaning vague and ill-defined, but born,
Perchance, of triumph in the arms of scorn.
The hand, that holds the volume, to his side
Drops, and he marches with a bolder stride.
Too wary, still, words for his thoughts to find,
We'll view them as they marshal in his mind.
“ O glorious system ! ne'er did toiling brain

Of towering genius in its wild dreams feign,
Or in its theories with rapture greet,
A scheme so fine, so rounded, so complete,
As that which we have realized, and brought
Into this world-life from the realms of thought!
Oh, what dull fools do kings and chiefs appear,
And all who have striven, by martial force and
fear

Alone, to fix a firm yoke on mankind,
And chain the body, but leave free the mind!
A thousand accidents, destructive each,
Menace such domination gross, and breach
The labour'd structure—who would safely reign,
The empire of the mind must fix'd maintain.
On such a basis doth our proud sway rest:
Our yoke upon the spirit-part is prest—
Mind, heart, and soul, are crush'd into complete
Submission, and lie prostrate at our feet.
Held in such iron bondage, they enlist
Under the banner of the exulting priest
Each thought, each will, each feeling, each desire,
That lowly grovel, or that high aspire;
And he is skill'd to turn them 'gainst their source,
And by this strong alliance re-inforce
The subtle means by which he gain'd at first
A power whose chains may never now be burst.
Yet, they were wiser far who first conceived
The embryo-scheme—with finer art deceived
Their dupes—than we who, at this distant term,
Watch o'er the mighty full-growth of the germ.

The wretched tricks, this book shows have been
learn'd


By us, they never knew, or, knowing, spurn'd.
Forced by some marvels to amaze the crowd,
Prone at the shrine of wonder ever bow'd,
Sublime in nature, and of useful end,
They chose them,—such as God indeed might send;
If God there were, and He desired to show
The heavenly glory to this earth below.
But we—why, we select our works of might
As paltry mountebanks their tricks of sleight,
Who all that's most absurd and useless dare,
But from the vulgar to provoke a stare.
This threatens danger—should a day arise
When the thick clouds, that blind the people's eyes,
Shall be dispersed by the all-piercing light
That Knowledge sheds, and when their quicken'd
sight

Shall view her beams undazzled, they will see
The nature gross of this coarse jugglery—
Then all our labour'd scheme is water spilt,—
Then falls the stately structure we have built,
And well if some premonitory sound
Foretells the ruin that will spread around.
Oh, if there be a God—a God of truth—
What deep damnation, all devoid of ruth,
For us is hoarded!—But there is no God—
A Devil there may be,—*he* may have trod
Upon this globe, for his accursed feet
Would leave the very foot-marks that I greet

Where'er I turn mine eyes. Yet are there times
When I could almost wish the vesper-chimes
Came with as blest a meaning to my ear
As what they wafted long ago—the tear
Will start unbid to eyes that seldom weep,
When I recall the faith, so calm, so deep,
That nestled smiling in my youthful breast,
Ere knowledge came, and rudely dispossess'd
The startled habitant.—Yet, am I not
Happy, as 'tis? What is there I've not got
That reasonable man can wish for?—Love?
Oh, love's dear sweetness it is mine to prove,
Its gall is never tender'd me to drink—
Yon sprightly fop, who, staggering on the brink
Of inebriety, so loudly boasts
His conquests, and the dozenth mistress toasts,
Dreams not the priest, so silent and demure
Beside him, has enticed with his sly lure
A hundred bonny birdies for his one.
Well! here I'm guiltless—to my door they run
Tott'ring beneath a thousand sins, and, there
Throwing all down, one slight sweet fault they bear
Back to their homes—they're gainers every way.—
Gold do I wish? no farther need I stray
Than the next purple couch, where craven lies
A wealthy sinner—Terror, ere he dies,
Will shake the ingots from his palsied palm,
Which still would clutch them, into mine that, calm,
Lies spread beneath.—How pleasant doth it seem
That one, who in a God believes, should dream

He can be bought with gold ! I do not know
How ev'n a Devil could be purchased so.—
Perchance, Ambition smiles, and with the dower
Tempt me of that frail splendid bauble power ?
An autocrat, upon his throne of gold,
Which gleaming guards and glittering courtiers fold
All round, his proud feet footstooled by a world
That sees no banner save his own unfurl'd,
Might envy well the humble priest, that away
Which makes the heart implicitly obey
Its every nod—which, through mind, matter rules,
And scorns the wretched bungling by which fools
Perversely strive through matter, that dull slave,
To reach the mind within its secret cave.
If we at times upon the rack distend
Heretical limbs, 'tis solely for this end,—
That babbling mouths be gagg'd, that fear and pain
May force the wretches what is false to feign ;
That, so, the poison, to themselves confined,
May not diffuse, and taint the general mind—
And, that the ill-reasoning vulgar, when they see
These constant pangs annexed to heresy,
May deem it worthy of them, and regard
It as a crime—Our brains are not so marred
That we should think a sinew overstrained
Potent to force the mind, what it disdained
Before, to worship, and to recognize
Our Holy Church's truth, of heresy the lies.—
But yonder comes a man I much suspect
His lip hath moistened at that spring infect


Whose waters are more deadly to the soul
Than the most lethal poison, that doth roll
Its venom momentarily through the blood,
Is to the human frame. No influence good
Hath that young heretic girl—of heretic race,
Born in a clime where Heresy shows her face
Unveil'd, and claimeth boldly, and is given,
The homage of a land struck mad by Heaven—
Exerted o'er his mind. I even fear
The temptress hath beguiled his easy ear
With that most foul and damnable deceit—
Of Satan and his powers the master-feat—
That what the infallible Church hath fixed for ever
To doubt is lawful, and that one may sever
That holy bond of faith unquestioning,
By which each Catholic to the Church doth cling,
By human reason's rash presumptuous blow—
Thou comest seasonably, son—" "I know,
My father, 'tis a favourite haunt of thine,
These antique cloisters—" "Yes,—a most divine
And soothing influence breathes from out the walls,
Which on the care-worn heart refreshing falls
As evening-dew upon the shrinking flower
That's borne all day the sunbeam's sultry power.
The mind, thus softened, loves to meditate
On holy things, upon that future state
Which should into its own great vortex drink
Each thought, hope, longing, and for ever sink
All in its infinite depths.—On thee I thought,
My son, just as thou camest, and besought



All saints and angels within yonder blue
In thy behalf—If my surmise be true,
Great need hast thou of their celestial aid;
And I reproach myself that I delayed
Until this moment to admonish thee—
At once, then,—I forbid thee more to see
That heretic woman, on whose steps of late
Thou hang'st so constant—At an earlier date
I would have issued this resolved command,
But that my hopes, through zeal too sanguine, plann'd
That thou should'st win this sinner from the might
Of hell and darkness, causing the blest light
Of the true Church to shine upon her soul—
But the other way I fear the currents roll;
That she and Satan both have been too strong
For thy weak faith,—that her sweet syren tongue
Thy bark's decoying to a fatal shore—
Therefore—this first—henceforth see her no more.”
“ See her no more ! father, that cannot be—”
“ Cannot ? it must—” “ See her no more ! not see
That form that beams upon my raptured sight
More radiant-beautiful than heaven's own light !
Struck be mine eyes with blindness, when they fail
With sparkling joy that angel form to hail !
Ev'n were they blind, instinctive to her face
They'd turn, as flowers grow in a dark place
Towards the light—” “ Peace, peace, for shame !
nor pain,

With the hot breathings of a passion vain,
Ears that each day are lowly leant to hear

The faltering griefs of penitential fear.
Say thou resign'st this foolish girl, and I
Pardon these transports—"No,—I will not lie—
Know, Alice is my own affianced bride—"
"Then, with *the dead* she's doom'd to be allied—
For never, never shalt thou be embraced
A living bridegroom, in her arms enlaced."
"So be it then—to me a dark death life
Would be, if sever'd from my promised wife—
But still, my father, I have yet to learn
Thou bear'st a heart inexorably stern.
What, though, by wakening fingers never prest,
The chord of love lies slumbering in thy breast—
What, though thy heart ne'er glow'd with earth's
 desire,
And kindles only at a heavenly fire—
Canst thou not fancy, that, had beauty's beam
Play'd on that heart, it might have caught the gleam?
Canst thou not dream, had passion undissembled
Struck that hush'd chord, it might have woke and
 trembled?
Then, think that that, which might have been, hath
 been,
And, thus with me grown sympathetic, lean
To mercy's side." "Tis vain—give up the part—
Thy words are swallow'd in an echoless heart,
And leave no trace—go, try a fall with Fate,
And look to throw her, but think not to bate
One, and the least, pretension of the might
Thou now art matched withal. Yet, in despite



Of thy desert, this favour I concede—
What thou hast spoken here I will not heed,
Nor hold it final ; nor will I force now
An instant resolution, but allow
Time to these turbulent passions to subside,
That drown the voice of reason with their tide.
When yonder sun, now at the horizon's bound,
Shall have swung through three quarters of his round,
And stands right o'er our heads,—then to declare
Thy fixed resolve—or ay, or no—prepare.
And, I conjure thee, give the matter thought ;
For thy response not only will be fraught
With the decision of thine earthly state,
But also with thine everlasting fate.
For if, still obstinate, thou refuse to yield
To our command, thus is thy sentence seal'd :
Thou'rt excommunicated, and cut off—
A rotten branch, a mocking and a scoff,
For fiends to trample in their hideous glee—
For ever from the Church's living tree,
And doom'd for aye to writhe in torments dire,
Thy worm undying, and unquench'd thy fire.”—

CANTO III.

WITH tireless speed his radiant orbit winning,
High on the zenith is the great sun spinning,
Singing his light-song to the listening earth,
Who laughs the glad strain back in golden mirth.
And large white clouds, like icebergs, lazily
Are drifting through the heaven's azure sea,
Touch'd by the languid breeze ; who the long pinions,
That drooping wont to sweep our earth's dominions,
Must have updrawn and folded to his side,—
Else would they not part the leaves that strive to
hide

That bower'd maiden ? else would they not dare
To flutter gently o'er her gleaming hair,
And, amorous, brush with tremulous caress
From her fair forehead the o'ershadowing tress ?
But lo !—though close and dense the leafy braid,
One sunbeam bold has pierced its matted shade,
Striking aslant upon her brow's white sheen,—
And there she sits, a young and joyous queen
Crown'd with a sunbeam, not with jewell'd art,
While God's own sunshine lightens up her heart.
Her rosy lips a radiant smile doth sever—
Two coral banks that clasp a golden river ;

And gently heaves her bosom to delight,
As swells a calm sea to the moon's soft might.
What may the source be of this gushing gladness,
That fills the heart, and leaves no place to sadness?
A courier came from Cadiz with the morn,
And these the tidings his hot haste had borne—
At length, all safely anchor'd in the bay
The English galley—how long prayed for!—lay,
Which was to waft her from a foreign strand
Back, o'er the billows, to her native land.
What? *her* alone? ah, no,—for there was one—
He to whose vows her virgin troth was won—
For whom, if forced to choose, she would resign
That hope so dear, with which the exiled pine,
Once more to gaze upon that sacred earth
Which ever draws them by the tie of birth.
He will go with her, o'er the ocean foam,
To that blest thing she calls an English home.—
Oh, who will wonder that she feels so blest,
If love e'er forced the fortress of his breast—
If, chance-breath'd in a foreign land, the name
Of home thrill'd yearning longings through his
frame?—

But hark! the happy music of her heart
To outward voice its spirit doth impart;
And, bending, to a lute's low-murmuring strings
This unpremeditated lay she sings.

Oh, England! dear England! and shall I once more
With joy-swimming eyes greet thy sea-girdled shore,

As proudly it rises straight up from the main,
Throwing forth to the waves the calm front of disdain?

How often, when dreaming in banishment's night,
Has the gleam of thy cliffs whitely flash'd on my
sight !

And to kiss them I stoop'd—but I woke, and each ray
Of the blest apparition had vanish'd away.

Oh, how have I pined—'mid a rabble of slaves,
Over whom Superstition predominant raves,
Mouth-foaming like fiend—once more on thy land
Freeman-held, martyr-blest, in full freedom to stand !

'Mid a nation of men, self-thinking and brave,
Whose spirit no tyrant could ever enslave ;
Peace-loving,—while yet they are taught from their
youth
More dearly than peace to love freedom and truth.

And *he*—But my falt'ring voice fails as it sings,—
My cheek flushes, and trembles my hand on the
strings,—

And my heart, like a flower with sweet dew opprest,
Sinks under the burthen of being too blest.—

The dying notes still float upon the air,—
The chords still vibrate to the fingers fair,—
When, as the melody of joy is failing,
Breaks on the minstrel's ear a sound of wailing.



Nearer it comes, still nearer to her bower,
And strikes her bosom in her happy hour
With dark presage of evil undefined,
And wakes a shapeless terror in her mind.
All-trembling from the bower forth she starts,
And up the path with frighten'd swiftmess darts.
Wild rushing t'wards her, pouring shriek on shriek—
The fearful language grief and terror speak—
She sees that faithful nurse who, though at home
In ease she might have staid, preferr'd to roam
To foreign climes, that so she might be near
That mistress to her aged heart so dear.
To speak she tries, but still doth terror strong
Chain the articulate utt'rance of her tongue;
And pours of sobs and shrieks a broken tide,
And works her hands, and heaves her gasping side.
"Oh, tell me what may mean this passion wild—
Oh, speak, dear nurse, to Alice,—to thy child—
I tremble at my thoughts, and bode the worst,—
In mercy, speak! or oh! this heart will burst.
Is he—Alphonse? oh, tell me, what of him?
My heart is fainting, and my sight grows dim—
Speak, speak!—" "Oh, lady—the Inquisition's
stone

Is round him now, and none may hear him moan—
With my own eyes I saw him rudely torn
Along the street, and to those dungeons borne—"
"And I in song pour'd forth my idle breath,
Whilst my betroth'd was hurried to his death!"
She shudders—Tight her hand upon her heart

Is prest, as though she fears lest it may start
Forth from her bosom,—wildly then away
She plucks it,—but the bitter pang that lay
Deep in her breast she could not with it tear—
She makes a silent gesture of despair,
And sudden falls, as though the instant levin
Had struck her, darted from the height of heaven.
Those limbs, so lately lithe and full of grace,
Are rigid and distorted ; on that face,
But now all flush'd with life and love, has past
The paleness of the grave ; those lips, that fast
Warbled a minute since their joyous song,
Are still and white, as kiss'd by Death ; the throng
Of happy thoughts, that heaved that snowy breast
With tender tumult, are, like it, at rest.
The breeze has ris'n, and waves her golden hair
In bright disorder o'er her forehead fair ;
As o'er the pallid midnight moon in heaven
The streamers of the yellow cloud are driven.
The flutt'ring tresses, with a tender strife,
Seem emulous to kiss her back to life.
But breathless still and motionless she lies—
The weeping nurse her sedulous service plies ;
From the cool fount sprinkles her face so pale,
And bares her lovely bosom to the gale.
But life, tho' by the sudden shock expell'd
From its sweet home, was not for ever quell'd—
It ventures back,—her bosom faintly sighs,
And backwards slide the white lids of her eyes,
Slowly, as in the morning's dewy hour

Unclose the petals of a wakening flower.
Her eyes first wander with bewilder'd air,
Then settle in a fix'd and painful stare,
While to her brow her hand is rais'd and prest—
As though the spirit were in toilsome quest
Of the deserter Memory ; but in vain
It strives the startled Power to regain.
Her white lips move, and from their quivering
bounds

These whisper'd words well forth in broken sounds—
“What is it, nurse?—hath illness seized me here?—
My heart has heaviness—what means that tear?—
Oh, listen, nurse,—I've had a fearful dream—
Alphonse and I, beneath a bright sun's beam,
Stood at the altar, and he stretch'd his hand
To clasp my finger with the golden band
That would have join'd two loving hearts for ever,—
When a voice, hoarse with malice, bade us sever,
And a face, dark with hatred scowl'd between—
It was that priest's—and by a hand unseen
He was torn from me—and the light had flown,
And I fell fainting on the altar stone.
Oh, bring Alphonse, and let me see him here—
Nay, I will rise—some heavy ill I fear.
How comes my lute all broken on the ground?
The flowers all trampled?—all is peace around—
Ah! I remember—I was in that bower,
And singing lightly—oh, with what strong power
Does damm'd up memory begin to flow
Back on my struggling mind! Ah, now I know

Whence came my dream—the blow of wild despair,
That stunn'd my soul, left its impression there.
'Tis true—we're sever'd—and he lies alone,
Or dead, or fetter'd to the dungeon stone—
Her pallid face she covers with her hands,
And for some minutes without motion stands—
She starts, and lifts her claspt hands to the heaven,
And one deep moment unto prayer is given.
A ray of hope seems darted from the skies,
Plays o'er her face, and lightens in her eyes.
“All is not lost,” she cries, “if yet he live!
My God, this weak and doubting heart forgive!
Oh, fix my wavering faith, inspire my mind,
And make me ever to thy will resign'd!
Yes, there is hope!—Ye wolves! that o'er your prey
Gloat ravenous, still it may be snatch'd away
Uninjured from your gnashing jaws—for I,
To save my lover, am prepared to die.”

CANTO IV.

'TIS midnight—and the whitely shining sphere
 That loves our planet most, and leans most
 near

To its embraces, turns a face of light
 Down on the earth, so calm, so pure, so bright,
 That who would deem it gazed upon a world
 Where against Heaven Sin's banner is unfurl'd
 In desperate defiance—where its ray
 Alights upon no single spot of clay
 Unstain'd by guilt, by grief and woe unsadden'd
 By passion's hot tumultuous rage unmadden'd ?
 Oh, this regard, so changeless and serene,
 Symbols the faith with which this troubled scene
 Is look'd on by the good—or men below,
 Or angels from above—who surely know
 That God rules all, and that from foulest crime,
 And darkest misery, will spring in time
 (As from the offal, which the cattle scorn,
 Rise fragrant flowers and fields of smiling corn)
 All that is best and happiest, God's own glory,—
 And that but chapters in Redemption's story
 Are pain and evil ; and, when it is finish'd,
 That all that's dark and doubtful will have vanish'd—

Yes! brightly shines the moon, and every star
Trembles with splendour in the dim afar ;
But moon and stars shine only for the free,
And their blest light the captive cannot see
Who, fetter'd fast and manacled, is thrown
In rayless darkness on the dungeon stone.
What are his thoughts in this his trial's hour,
That seems the triumph of satanic power ?
Is his mind bow'd with fear ? doth he decline
His manhood's bearing before priestcraft's shrine ?
Confused and fev'rish do his fancies roll ?
Is self the centre of the whirling whole ?
Ah, no ; for self he hath no craven fear—
He's far from human aid, but God is near ;
To whom he now can look with steadfast eye,
Assured that gracious ear his mutter'd cry
Will hear ; for gone is every doubt he'd known—
Religion's come and superstition's flown.
Yes—the last chain has fallen from his mind ;
The last dull film has ceased his sight to blind.
At the foul monster, he had once adored,
Sick'ning he shudders ; hated and abhorr'd
Are its obscene embraces ; now he sees,
Stript of the harlot ornaments that seize
And cheat the senses, that misshapen heap
Of incongruous deformities, which keep
In filthy union by the bond alone
Of mutual ugliness that's round them thrown—
That loathsome thing, the world's most hideous blot,
By falsehood from the rape of truth begot.

And, throwing his anxiety and care
On One who loves them in His strength to bear,
In his dark humid prison he were blest,
Did not the thought break ever on his rest
Of that fair being he had held his own,
Who in a foreign land was now alone,
Friendless and helpless, girt around by those
Who, aye conceal'd, might soon prove open foes ;
Nor can he give love's last sad proof, that awes
By its excess, of dying in her cause.
He clasps his hands, on which the irons clank
With the damp dungeon's death-dews cold and dank,
And in his agony on Alice calls—
The name of Alice echoes from the walls.
“ Alice ! oh, Alice ! ”—The huge iron door
On jarring hinges grates, and on the floor
Falls the faint glimmer of a lamp—He starts—
Is his call answer'd ? to these gloomy parts
Hath his strong love, pour'd forth upon the night,
Compell'd her by some strange mysterious might ?
“ Alice ! is't thou ? ” Ah, no, a warder grim,
Of feature rugged, tall, and vast of limb,
Advancing, o'er the prostrate captive stoops,
With haste the manacles from his hands unloops,
And strikes the galling fetters from his feet—
Then “ Rise,” he cries, “ and follow, prisoner sweet.”
“ To the torture ? ” “ Ay, to the torture,” he doth snarl.
“ 'Tis well—I'm ready— ” “ Quick, then,” cries the
churl,
“ And still.” They leave the cell with open door,

And a long, low and narrow corridor
Pace swiftly. At its end, a massive plate
Of iron bars their way; its ponderous weight
Heaves upwards slowly, as a secret spring
Is by the gaoler prest; he lets it swing
Noiselessly backwards—and still on they glide.
The young Alphonse and his repulsive guide.
At length before an oaken gate they stand,
With nails thick studded; with each brawny hand
The gaoler labouring at the monstrous key
Turns the reluctant bolt; the gate swings free—
And lo! they stand beneath the lovely light
Of moon and stars, and the fresh breeze of night
Breathes kindly on the captive's feverish face,
And clasps him fondly in its cool embrace.
“Where now, my friend?” Alphonse in wonder cries.
“To Cadiz now, along with me,” replies
The surly villain. “What? to—” “Ay, thou’rt
free—

But, if thou wilt remain so, o’er the sea
Swift must thou fly—I go in the same ship;
For when this comes to rumour’s blabbing lip,
Death meets me everywhere on Spanish ground—”
“Free?—and the torture?” “Oh, I love to sound
The courage of a man—I love to wring
His soul with terror, when I cannot sting
His flesh with torments;—I hate every man,
And love to rack him with what pangs I can.”
“Me, then, why dost thou save?” “Oh not for love
Of thee,—and nought could have the power to move

Me from the deep enjoyments of my trade
But weight of yellow gold—" And, say, who
paid—?"

"Thou know'st the lady—Ah, still do I fear
I've ta'en a rash and hasty step; I hear
That in that heretic land, for which we're bound,
No racks, no screws, no stakes are to be found—
Can this be true?" "'Tis so—but tell"—"Alas,
How barbarous a country! Could I pass
Back o'er my last few steps—well, well! 'tis done,
And I must make the best of't—" "Wilt thou stun
Me with thy growlings, and make no reply
To what I ask? That lady—" "We must fly,
And not stand questioning here." "I will not stir
Until thou tell me clearly about her
Who hired thy services. Where is she? speak."
"This day she went to Cadiz—we're to seek
Her there—" "My own, own Alice! then thou'rt
safe!"

Oh, haste,—the time flies quickly—and I chafe
At each delay that holds me from thine arms,
My sweetest love!" "Ay! all my wise alarms
Were vain until thou learnedst that—" "But stay,
Their hot pursuit will reach us on the way—" "If we stand here much longer." "Nay, one hour
Will not have forfeited its life's brief power
To the usurping part, ere, on his round
Among the cells, the warder will have found
Mine vacant." "That's provided for; our flight
Will secret be until the morning's light,

At least. So, let us mount, and hotly ride—
The steeds are here—" On, then, whate'er be-
tide!"

With hope and love the stripling's heart beats high,
As onwards through the silent night they fly.
He thinks on *her*—his journey's blissful meed—
And chides his panting courser's lagging speed.
Ah! if he knew that each successive stride
Lengthens the space that parts him from her side—
That, where he lay a minute since, she lies,
Her freedom and the light of starry skies
Exchanged for the damp dungeon's horrid gloom—
That she hath laid her head beneath the doom
That menaced his—that shortly it may fall,
And crush, with her, his hopes, his love, his all!
Yes—as Alphonse the dungeon quickly left,
He saw not, deep within a shadowy cleft
Behind the door withdrawn, a slender shape—
Wrapt in a flowing mantle's folding cape,
While a broad hat droop'd shrouding o'er the face—
That, hush'd and still, stood with the moveless grace
Of statue that, in life-like beauty rich,
Rests breathless, lifeless, in its marble niche.
'Twas Alice, come to dupe the warder's sight,
And win dear moments for her lover's flight.
He pass'd unheeding,—though his outstretch'd
hand

Might have touched that at whose soft clasp's com-
mand

So oft it trembled; though with throbbing pain

That heart, he longed unto his own to strain,
Beat close beside him; though his promised bride,
His only love, was standing at his side.
And she—Oh, as he sternly passed on,
How did she long, ere yet he should have gone,
To throw herself into his arms, and, telling
How she had wept and pray'd for him, her swelling
Heart lighten of its flood of love repress!
But still she kept it pent within her breast.
Her love was strong enough its strength to curb,
And suffer'd not its passion to disturb
Her well-laid plans. Yet, one brief moment came
When, though she'd heard him call upon her name
In his loud anguish—though she deeply felt
That present with his soul her image dwelt—
Still, she almost reproach'd him in her heart
That, when he pass'd her close, he did not start,—
That some strange sympathy did not discover
The presence of the loved one to the lover.
He's past—and, while conflicting hope and fear
Divide her heart, she stands with straining ear,
Though long the distant steps have ceased to pour
Their sombre echoes through the corridor.
At length she stirs, and heaves a long deep breath—
“Thank God!” she cries, “from this dark haunt
of death
He's saved! at me their malice let them dart—
With look unblench'd, and with unflinching heart
I now can meet it. To thy hands divine
My life, my soul, O Father, I consign!”

She shuts the ponderous door,—its jarring sound
Strikes harshly on the walls and stony ground,
And there in deep and boding murmurs shivers ;
She gropes along the walls,—as from the rivers
Of tears that had been pour'd in bitter tide
From eyes which Death's cold hand soon touch'd
and dried,
They drip and drizzle—a chill tremor steals
Through all her frame, and her young blood congeals.
She shudders from them, and, her mantle thrown
Round her slight form, upon the damp hard stone
She lays her tender limbs,—but not to sleep.
Her restless thoughts a painful vigil keep
Throughout her mind : she thinks of him for whom
She will not shrink to fill an early tomb ;
Of, when he finds her not, his bitter sorrow—
And from this thought her tears rush swift to borrow
That license which no thought of self would give ;
She thinks of friends far, far away, that live
In that dear island whose most blessed shore
Her longing eyes may never gladden more ;
Of him who, smitten by his exile, sleeps
Far from his fathers, and again she weeps ;
She thinks of foes who throng on every side,
And darkly menace,—and her tears are dried ;
A noble indignation hotly glows
Deep in her breast, and to her pale cheek throws
Her Saxon blood ; she turns her thoughts in scorn
Away from them ; though helpless and forlorn,
She fears not these dark workers of foul wrong,—

These murderers of the feeble and the young,—
These villain agents, through whom Satan strives
To rack on earth with pains of hell those lives
That are not in his grasp to writhe hereafter—
On such a heaving sea her vexed thoughts waft her.
But o'er the troubled waters of her soul
A bright and steady gleam doth ever roll
From the blest light that Faith holds in her hand;
By which she sees each woe and trial plann'd
By One she knows who will not let her perish,—
One who has promised to protect and cherish
All those who trust in Him, and for their sake
All evils to conspire for good doth make.—
The warder comes, and, seeing on the ground
Her muffled form, goes onwards on his round,
Deeming his prisoner safe. Her heart exempt
From this solicitude, she tries to tempt
The gentle touch of sleep unto her eyes.
Perchance, 'twas coming—but, as still she lies,
What hymn-like strain falls on her startled ear?
Now low it languishes; now, strong and clear,
The dungeon's echoing roof and walls along
It pours the billows of impetuous song.
Breathless, she listens to its tuneful swell—
It seems to flow from an adjacent cell.
From her stone couch, upstarting, she doth glide,
And leans her ear against its humid side.
These words seem rising from the dungeon's floor,
And on her ear their measured utterance pour.

“ Yes—the life-tide, ebbing swiftly, soon will leave
the stranded bark

On that wreck-strewn beach to moulder, the cold
grave-yard, drear and dark—

Let the vessel strike and shiver ! still the mariner
will float,

I,—the living *I*,—the spirit, that can voyage without
boat—

For that through the wormy grave we enter the
true life I know,

And that of immortal being death is but the sharp
birth-throe.—

Hark ! the minstrelsy of Heaven’s flowing down-
wards through the stars,

In drops of sweetest music filter’d even through
these prison-bars ;

And bright bands of holy angels, from the azure
stooping down,

O’er my agony-wrung forehead hold the martyr’s
glorious crown.

‘ Wear it,’ say they, ‘ thou hast won it, valiant sol-
dier of the Cross !

Earthly comfort, earthly pleasure who hast counted
but as dross,—


Who against the rampant Wrong hast champion’d
the down-trodden Right,—

Who hast look’d the foeman in the face, and fought
a goodly fight.

Oh ! it was not in the battle, where in blood is
pour’d the life—

Where's the coward would not dare to spring to
Heaven from the strife?
But the passions, that assail each mortal heart, did
round thee rise,
And upon their trodden corpses thou hast mounted
to the skies.
And the banded powers of Satan on thee pour'd
their hellish might,
Led by Superstition, who is, where not blood-stained,
black as night—
And the seven-hill-throned Woman, Superstition's
loathsome spawn,
That vile wanton, who drinks deeply, and whose
copious draughts are drawn
From the blood of all the holy saints upon the earth
that be,—
She 'gainst Heaven who wars in Heaven's name,
many-titled Blasphemy—
In her ruthless grasp she clutched thee, and she
cried—*Now, lowly bend*
Unto me, the great, the gorgeous, whose God-
granted realms extend
Over all the earth,—like all my subjects, bend and
growling lie,
*Or I'll smite, and rack, and slay thee—*But thou
turn'dst a tranquil eye
On that shameless forehead's frowning, saying—
Sooner will I die
Times a thousand, and a thousand.—Then she
smote thee on the face,


And she tore thee with her talons, and, with demon-
like grimace,
From thy veins she drank the life-blood—but thine
eye was turned away
From that form of horror, and was meekly raised
to Him who lay
Once upon the cross in tortures, oh! more bitter
far than thine,
And to Him, thy Lord, in holy trust thyself thou
didst resign.
And He look'd on thee with pity, as of one that
loveth well—
For He loves thee—*how* He loves thee no created
tongue can tell—
But between the sinking sufferer and her persecuting
foes
From the Heaven He forbore His mighty arm to
interpose,
That the measure of their malice to o'erflowing they
might brim,
And that thee, a blessed martyr, archangelic hosts
might hymn,
And that, all the alloy of earth burnt out by anguish
from thy soul,
Without tarnish, without blemish, thou might'st pass
unto thy goal.
Oh! if envy could possess us, we would envious be
of thee,
For far nobler than an angel is the angel that's to be,—
We have merely held the virtue that was in us at
our birth,



Thou hast quell'd the stubborn evil that sprang
with thee from the earth—
But the mighty One, who sent us, sits expectant
on His throne;
And the gleaming gates of Paradise are widely open
thrown,
And the thronging angels range in purple ranks
adown the steep,
And to thee all eyes are looking, and to thee all
wishes leap—
Sweetest sister! do not tarry,—darling sister! reach
thy hand,—
We will waft thee on our pinions to that blessed
spirit-land—
We will bear thee in a moment, and will lay thee
in His arms,
But we will not chase thy sorrows, and we will not
heal thy harms;
For He's jealous of such loving service render'd to
His own,
And by no hand must thy tears be wiped away but
His alone!—
They are drawn into the Heaven,—and I wish at
once to die,
But not yet my spirit's budding wings are strong
enough to fly,
And the weary chain is round me still that binds
me to the clay,
And the shadows of the earth snatch from my eyes
the heav'nly day.

But my soul hath gladness still, the holy rapture is
not dead,
Though the sights and sounds celestial from my
blunted sense have fled ;
For I'm fill'd with divine longings, and they seem
upon the wings
From the earth to lift me heav'nwards of their vast
imaginings—
Quickly come, then, O sweet Jesu ! quickly come,
my Lord, my life !
Snatch my trembling, hoping spirit from its clay-
cell, from the strife."


Intensely Alice drank in all the sound,
Till the last note's faint echo died around ;
Then, fill'd with awful gladness, on the floor,
Her stony couch, she lays her limbs once more,
Blessing that God who lends a hero's might
To a weak woman, battling for the right.
" O holy saint ! whose holiness is shown
By faith, by patience, and by love alone ;
By the pure heart, whence sin is purged away ;
By the bright hope, that never dims its ray ;
By the great spirit, that contemns the stake,
And, when the frame-work of the globe doth shake
Beneath the feet, turns its unwav'ring eyes
To the blest beacon gleaming from the skies :
Nor fears, while that still fixes every glance,
That any stumble's treacherous mischance
Can, from its equilibrium's position



Disturbing it, down dash it to perdition.
Thou boast'st not physical wonders to perform,—
Hast lived but once, and never quelled a storm.
Had not the blows of persecution's ire
Struck out the latent spark of heavenly fire,
Nought would have mark'd thee, passing to the grave,
From the humblest Christian Jesus died to save.
No glowing pencil is required to paint
The unconscious miracles of the real saint."
Thus Alice mused ; till gentle sleep down-slid
On dewy wings, and closed each ivory lid
With gentle touch, and lovingly caress'd
Her wearied frame until it sank to rest.

CANTO V.

'TIS nearly noon-tide, but a horrid gloom
Wraps in its heavy folds the torture-room ;
And two wan tapers, with the morning-night
That struggle, vanquish'd, but display its might.
Large rings of iron from the roof depend
O'er rings below, ropes past through which distend
The victim's limbs ; while tools of torture frown
Along the walls, ranged from the ceiling down.
No nerve, no sinew of the human frame,
Which most ingeniously to maul and maim
A fitting engine was not there prepared—
In sooth, exulting Rome might well have dared
To boast the skill and science there display'd,
Could one be sure she'd not invoked the aid
Of him whose talent 'tis to torture well,
And plagiarised the instruments of hell.
The walls are moist—'twould seem the horrors dire,
To perpetrate these wretches never tire,
Had even wrung the dungeon's pulseless heart,
And forced the sweat in clammy drops to start
On its cold stony front ; seems the dense air
Heavy with groans of those who suffer'd there.
The judge is seated on his lofty bench,



Tall, thin, and pale; whose trade had been to wrench
In youth the victim's joints with his own hand,
His zeal in which had raised him to command.
Now he presided at each fearful scene,
As cold and as impassive in his mien,
As callous to the wretch's pangs and groans,
As rack that tore, or boot that crushed his bones.
The dark and treacherous visage of the priest
Scowls at the judge's side; a seething yeast
Of passions in his working features boils—
Rage, shame, and hatred, and revenge—each toils
To be the dominating element,
And rise o'er those with which 'tis mixed and blent.
And who's the hapless victim? oh, for whom
Are these dark agents plotting fearful doom?
Is't yon fair maiden, all alone that stands?
Is she delivered to such ruffian hands?
And will e'en torturing racks and pulleys dare
Those lovely limbs to mangle and to tear?
Her noble brow is calm,—no clinging fear
Ruffles its placid smoothness; not a tear
Dims the pure brightness of that clear blue eye
Which looks at fate, and sees it coming nigh
Unfalt'ring; care, and pain, and sudden grief,
Have rudely shaken every flushing leaf
From the red rose that bloom'd upon her cheek,
Which terror could not touch; she doth not speak,—
But her small sweet mouth slightly is comprest,
And one round arm is crossed upon her breast.
Oh! had a raging lion, driven wild

By the sharp fangs of famine, at that child
Of loveliness been loosed, her beauty's spell
Had potent been his hunger-pangs to quell ;
Had hurl'd his ravening fury from its seat,
And sunk him crouch'd and fawning at her feet.
But the most savage beast that roams the wood
Is mild, and meek, and placable in mood,
Compared with those whose coils are round her
thrown.

Comes forth the judge's cold and hissing tone—
A snake, that hisses not with sudden bite,
But in whose breast for ever deadly spite
Lies sweltering, and that cannot choose but hiss—
It says—" Clerk, once more ask the prisoner this,"
(For a young secretary had his seat
Below the judge, sleek, slim, and grimly neat)—
" Will she confess the details of the flight
Which daringly she aided yesternight ?
The route the culprit took ? the measures ta'en
To speed his ultimate escape from Spain ?"
The minion puts the question—from her eye
A glance of quiet scorn is her reply.
" By sullen passion reason's voice is hush'd ;
This obstinacy must be quell'd and crush'd
By matter that's more obstinate—prepare
The rack ! " Two villains forward step, and dare
To seize her maiden form in their foul grip,
And her white neck and arms proceed to strip
In haste. The vile indignity's surprise
Leaps sudden to her heart—forth from her eyes

Looks the bold spirit of her fearless race,
Her Saxon blood fast flushing all her face.
Again the blood flies swiftly from her cheek,
And her sweet look is calm, resign'd, and meek ;
The passion of a moment is subdued,—
And to their hands, however rough and rude,
She yields herself—" Father," she sighs, " thy will
In faith, in patience, nerve me to fulfil !"
Doubtless, by faith helpt heavenwards through the
air

(The feather which doth wing the shaft of prayer,
And guides it straight into the ear of God),
Heard had that sigh been, and she would have trod
With feet unfaltering that path of dread,
Within the narrow way, which martyrs tread—
But it was not to be,—in that last hour
God sent an agent of His saving power.
Her ruthless foes a strong hand dash'd aside,
Their fury foil'd, and smote their vaunting pride—
A mighty hand, that yet shall rock the world,
Bearing Truth's banner to all eyes unfurl'd,—
Shall shake its terrors o'er the seats accurst
Of Falsehood and of Tyranny,—shall burst
The slavish chains that, hell-forged, tightly bind
The tortur'd body, and the darken'd mind,—
And o'er the oppressor, in his awe-struck wonder,
Shall vibrant roll Heaven's delegated thunder.—
A lacquey enters in disorder'd haste—
" How, now ?" exclaims the judge ; " whence this
ill-placed

Intrusion?" "Sir, the English Consul stands
Without, and instant liberty demands
Of entrance."—"Then we'll go to him—Remove
The prisoner."—"Nay, most courteous judge,—to
prove

With mine own eyes the truth of what I hear,
I've closely track'd thy lacquey's steps, and here
Proof most demonstrative I find—my tongue
I will not trust to speak of what has wrung
My soul with horror. Briefly this I say,—
Ye've dared your rude and lawless hands to lay
Upon a noble English lady (though,
Did her blood thickly as the kennel flow,
Not less her person were inviolate,
Not less her safety dear unto our State)—
I, then, demand that you forthwith restore
This lady to her liberty—what more
In reparation just I may require
Shall rest for future counsel." "Thy desire,
Though wrapt in speech less threat'ningly that
lowers

Than thine, might not be granted. All our powers
We from the Church derive,—to her from Heaven,
By God's hand seal'd, her high commission's
given.

We therefore to no earthly state can be
Responsible—" "This subtle point with thee
I will not stay to argue, nor discuss
Whether a power, that's manifested thus,
From God or Satan is most like to flow—

My duty simply is to make thee know
The instructions which the Lord Protector gave
In such a case.—‘Should the Inquisition brave
The might of England, and presume to clasp
A British subject in its murderous grasp,—
Then, with a holy and relentless rage,
Will England war with the Inquisition wage,
Will break its strength, and tread it under foot,
And wreck the accursed tree both branch and
root.” *

Ev’n as he spoke, their courage ’gan to fail,
Their hearts all trembled, and their looks grew
pale.

For, a dire word of dark and sudden fear,
The name of Cromwell smote the shuddering ear
Of every foe of England—well they knew
That what he promised, he would promptly do ;
And that the lightning of his wasting sword
Flash’d where the thunder of his menace lour’d.
Alice is free ! and walks secure from harm
Beneath the ægis of her country’s arm.—
Rome dared not then to cope with England’s might,
And at her anger trembled with affright.
’Tis alter’d now—yet, undecay’d remains

* We may remind the reader that Cromwell actually *did* rescue a British subject from the oppression of the Inquisition, under circumstances similar to those mentioned here ; the alternative he proposed, in the event of his demand being refused, being a war of extermination on the part of England against that Institution.

The life of England; in her children's veins
The Saxon blood throbs strongly as of yore,
And hearts they bear stout as their fathers bore.
O mighty England! a gigantic brand,
Thou liest sheathed, and wait'st the stalwart hand
That from thy soft inglorious repose
Shall liberate thee, and against the foes
Of Truth, and Freedom, and the Human Mind,
Shall wield thee in the battle of mankind.

* * * * *

How brightly, softly in the twilight heaven
The star of love shines on the brow of even!
From the hot kisses of the sun the sky
Still faintly blushes—sweet, and sad, and shy
Its look, as maiden's who, at parting kist
By her young lover, steals from passion's tryst.
How light the breeze that leans against the sails
Of yonder gallant ship! it almost fails
To move her slowly on her onward way:
How still and calm the waters of the bay!
With its rough play fatigued, each restless billow
Seems softly sleeping on its azure pillow.
Still gently touch that vessel, O thou breeze!
And all thy rage reserve for other seas;
Ye waves! lie hushed,—still calmly slumber on,
Nor wake in crested fury till she's gone.
For ne'er did stately argosy, that glow'd
With gold and jewels on the eastern road,
Bear richer freight than thine, thou English bark!
That in thy broad and shelt'ring breast dost ark

Two young and happy lovers—Who would weigh
Golconda's gems, the wealth of all Cathay,
Against the mutual treasure of that love
Whose pure delight their throbbing bosoms prove?—
Withdrawn from others, on the deck they stand,
And her hand trembles in his trembling hand;
He looks into her eyes, but they are cast
Downwards upon the dark blue waters—fast
O'er her white cheek the flitting blushes spread,
Wind-wafted roses o'er a lily bed.
No word is spoken,—for all words are weak
The passionate meaning of the heart to speak.
Who, that has loved, has felt not such an hour,
When the soul vindicates its innate power,
And spurns th' encumbrance of gross matter's aid—
When,—its pure feeling to profane afraid
By trusting it to language, which is fraught,
A hackney'd vessel, with each common thought,—
By an intense, deep silence there is shown
All that it longs to know, and to make known?—
The moon comes forth, and with invisible hand
Flings o'er the shimmering sea her silver band;
And downwards on the silent lovers streams
The filmy net-work of her lucid beams.
They yield unto those meshes' magic might,
Are drawn together, and their lips unite.
And they are happy, and must be—the chain,
That binds their hearts in oneness, o'er the vain
And shifting world swings not its ends abroad,
But gathers them into the hand of God.

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